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IMPACT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN COMBATING TERRORISM IN MALI, 2011-2018

By

Doumbia Lassana (Ph.D.)
doumbial@yahoo.fr

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Impact of Regional Cooperation in Combating Terrorism in Mali, 2011-2018. It provides a background on the evolution of terrorist activities in Mali. The paper evaluates the reasons for terrorism in Mali and its impact on the socio-economic and political activities in Mali. Since the crisis and terrorist activities started, there has been various regional cooperation within the West African sub-region and the African continent as a whole in dealing with the situation, even though various challenges confront the effort of regional cooperation in combating terrorism in Mali. The paper employed secondary source such as the use of textbooks, journals, government publications, conference and seminar lecture materials, and the internet. The paper adopted the conflict theory and collective security theory. The findings pointed out that the crisis in Mali has dramatically affected peace and stability in Mali. The insecurity has displaced hundreds of thousands of persons and exacerbated regional food security and poor humanitarian conditions. The paper made some recommendations which include that, the Malian government must ensure an all-inclusive government by making the people of Mali feel like true citizens of the state without discrimination from any section of the state. Regional cooperation which has been a mechanism for collective security must be strengthened. Governments and Heads of State must ensure that their national boundaries are monitored to avoid the proliferation of weapons, trans-border terrorist activities, and other criminal activities. This will ensure safety for all the states within the regions.

Introduction

The impact of regional cooperation in combating terrorism in Mali from 2011 to 2018 highlights a critical period of intense conflict and complex international response. The Malian crisis, which unfolded in the early 2010s, drew widespread attention due to its rapid escalation into a multifaceted conflict involving both local grievances and transnational terrorism. The surge in violence and instability in Mali not only posed a significant threat to national security but also had far-reaching implications for regional stability and international security.

Mali's strategic location in the Sahel region, characterized by its vast and often ungoverned desert areas, became a hotspot for extremist activities, including the presence of groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, and other militant factions. The insurgency in northern Mali, fueled by long-standing ethnic tensions, economic deprivation, and political instability, prompted both regional and global actors to seek collaborative approaches to address the crisis. The situation was further exacerbated by the 2012 military coup and the subsequent occupation of northern Mali by Islamist militants, which created an urgent need for coordinated international intervention. In response, regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU)

sought to play pivotal roles in stabilizing Mali. Despite their efforts, the effectiveness of these regional interventions was limited by various challenges, including insufficient resources, political disagreements, and the need for international support. The UN and other external actors, including former colonial power France, became deeply involved, leading to the establishment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) and the subsequent French Operation Serval.

This period of intense regional cooperation and intervention offers valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of collective security efforts in addressing terrorism. By examining the impact of these regional and international initiatives, it becomes evident that while significant strides were made in terms of military and logistical support, the underlying issues driving the conflict—such as governance failures, poverty, and marginalization—remained largely unaddressed. Thus, the crisis in Mali highlighted the need for collective action among African leaders and renewed focus on regional cooperation to address security challenges. The paper evaluates the impact of these regional cooperation efforts in combating terrorism in Mali from 2011 to 2018.

Conceptual Clarification

National Security

The concept of "national security" is often misunderstood, says Wolfer (1962), and as such elusive, says (Carey, 2000). National security, like every other science concept, lacks a single universally accepted definition due to varying epistemological and methodological differences and backgrounds of scholars. Meanwhile, there is a tendency for the social science community to reach a consensus. National security connotes more than military defence or territorial defence by the military. National security therefore, includes food security, economic security, military security and even more.

According to Daramola (2012), national security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomacy, power projection, and political power. The concept developed mostly in the United States of America after World War II. Initially focusing on military might, it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non-military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society. Accordingly, as put by Mahmood (2014:11), in order to possess national security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation-states but also non-state actors such as violent non-state actors, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental damage in this category. Measures taken to ensure national security include: using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; marshalling economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation; maintaining effective armed forces; implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation); ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure; using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; using counterintelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats.

Every state has several core obligations which, from the national security standpoint, as Mohammed (2006:3) said, can be reduced into two, viz.:

a. The preservation of the safety of its citizens at home and abroad; and
b. The preservation of the integrity of the borders and assets of the nation-state, including the physical assets, such as infrastructure and the economy, and the intangible assets, such as national prestige and political ability to project power and authority. Almost

everything else such as the protection of the symbols, cultures, languages, and traditions of the society derives from these two fundamental points. But what is most important is the fact that many things of a seemingly non-security nature impinge upon these two points.

Thus, from the foregoing, national security is the most strategic preoccupation of all nation-states. However, security is more than military or police security or security from external attacks. The human security and non-military dimensions of security should be applied in its widest sense to include economic security, social security environmental security, food security, and high quality of life of the citizens.

Terrorism

The 21st century is often referred to as the "Age of Terrorism". In virtually all the nooks and crannies of the globe, violent terrorist attacks and eruptions are a daily occurrence, perpetrated by sundry groups, organizations, state and non-state actors, and even couples and lone individuals. The inspiration and motives of the terrorists are as varied as their victims. Terrorism has already assumed a dimension of a clear and present danger to national and international peace and security, and the need to stem its frightening tide has engaged the attention of nations and governments at all levels.

According to Conteh (2014), terrorism has persisted almost unabated; it is only changing shape and tactics, and sometimes mutating and assuming more virulence. Terror, these days, does not respect boundaries, class, race, or issues. Terrorist activities are becoming increasingly more deliberate, cynical, and deadly, leading to unspeakable horror, tears, and sorrows, as evidenced by the attacks in Paris in January and November 2015, the anarchy and carnage going on in Libya since the ouster of Ghaddafi, and in war-torn Somalia (where Al-Shabbab has remained formidable). Gunmen have, now and again, shot tourists and other foreigners in Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt, while schools and hotels have fallen prey to bloodletting marauders in Kenya, Mali, and Burkina Faso as recently as January 2016. All this, however, is little compared to the sheer madness unleashed in Syria and Iraq by the murderous ISIL/ISIS elements, who have even managed to carve a territory for themselves which they called a caliphate. In several other places, particularly the US and Sweden, individuals and even couples have carried out mass murders in public areas, such as emporiums, schools, churches, and military barracks – though their actions were not always termed terrorism.

However, Akpotor and Oromareghake (2013) surmise that the concept, "terrorism", is etymologically derived from a Latin and French word: terrere, meaning "to frighten," and "state rule by terror" respectively. According to Stibli (2010), terrorism is an act of using unconventional tactics to achieve political goals through the use of violence, sabotage or threat to the state, organization or social group against civilians with the sole motive of producing psychological fear and intimidation. Annan (2005) described terrorism as an act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants to intimidate a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act." But one thing holds constant, terrorist attacks do not occur in a vacuum, but are instead a product of complex interactions between individuals, organizations and environments. Furthermore, there are many different kinds of terrorism, defined primarily by ideological orientations like ethno-nationalism, left-wing, religious and so forth. And just like there are many different kinds of terrorism, there are many different kinds of contexts in which terrorism occurs (Forest, 2012).

Regionalism

The concept of regional integration is strongly attached to international relations and politics especially in contemporary global system. Europeans were engaged in what could be described as alliance building and the formation of pacts and power blocs for global dominance which later gave birth to the Warsaw Pact against the formation of NATO. Before the end of the Second World War, other forms of alliances were formed, for example, the alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, Russia and Serbia, France and Russia, France and Great Britain, Britain and Japan, and many more such alliances before the Great War.

Regional integration or regional grouping has become a de facto new structure of the world since the collapse of the world's powerful kingdoms and the end of pernicious and rapacious economic exploitation occasioned by colonialism and imperialism. This situation, which willy-nilly structured the world into an uneven developmental pattern, will unfortunately continue to dominate the world political and economic features and reality. Furthermore, the First and the Second World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 were glaringly evident in the need for integration and cooperation to maintain collective security and create a haven for development in all parts of the world. Apart from the international organizations, at the top of which is the United Nations, where every independent and sovereign country is a member, regional groupings cut across the entire continents of the world.

Like human beings, which are social in habit, a nation cannot exist in isolation in the world, whatever its level of power, human and material resources, or knowledge. There is scarcely a country, today, that is not a member of one regional group or the other in addition to other bilateral or multilateral organizations it may be affiliated to. In international relations, as Sheriff and Nwokedi (2016) noted, regional integration can be interpreted to mean a balance of power or strengthening of weaker nations. This is largely because states come together to lean on states with relatively greater powerhouses. States ally to have the advantage of not being attacked or enjoying the protection of the stronger ones among them. Economically, states come together to integrate for economic benefits and finding common ground to develop the most favoured nation states. This interprets regional integration as dealing with elimination of tariffs, boundary barriers, and the free movement of goods and persons within the borders of the integrating nations.

Igwe (2005:377) sees regionalism as the favouring of degrees of cooperation and integration, including a possible outright political union, at the regional level, as the supreme foreign policy objective, the ideas, and objectives supportive of this principle, the class alliance that will make it possible, as well as other processes of its disintegration. Despite the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and her COMECON socialist trading block, as well as her few other countries such as Ethiopia, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, the general tendencies, since the 2nd World War, for bigger economic and trading blocs, with military strategic and other political implications have continued. Norman notes that the trend towards regionalism and a regional arrangement is one of the most interesting developments in recent international relations. The charter of the United Nations specifically recognised it, and the Vandenberg Resolution, adopted by the United States Senate on June 11, 1948, gave it some strong endorsement. It has reached its fullest development in the Western Hemisphere and in Western Europe, but it has also appeared elsewhere (Norman, 2007: 558). It has certainly reached across all the world seven continents with varying levels of developments, achievements and challenges. One of the recent formations of such regional blocs is the Eurasian Economic Union. From the name, the organisation comprises countries across Northern Europe, Eurasia, Central Asia, and the Baltic.

Obydenkova (2006) believes the same concept can be applied to the constituent units of countries and cross-regional communication zones. Even if the regions are the constituent units of one country, they may be “integrated” by transportation and communication with the regions, or constituent units, of a neighbouring country. This is the indirect measure of

communicatory interdependence. The geopolitical continuities – shared borders, geographical neighbourhood – have been seen by Deutsch as the necessary conditions for regional integration. Thus, in the current analyses, foreign border and geographical neighbourhood (subdivided further into the location in the European or Asian part of Russia) are independent variable which might provide some explanation for success or failure of regional cooperation with European actors and the emergence of new regionalism.

In a nutshell, regional integration is the joining of individual states within a region into a larger whole. The degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty. Deep integration that focuses on regulating the business environment in a more general sense is faced with many difficulties (Claar and Noelke, 2010:114-117). Regional integration initiatives, according to Van Langenhove (2003 cited in Samson and Halidu, 2014), should fulfill at least eight important functions: (i) the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development; (ii) the development of infrastructure programmes in support of economic growth and regional integration; (iii) the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance; (iv) the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society; (v) contribution to peace and security in the region; (vi) the building of environment programmes at the regional level; (vii) the strengthening of trade integration in the region and (viii) the strengthening of the region's interaction with other regions of the world (De Lombaerde and Van Langenhove 2007:377-383).

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory seeks to scientifically explain the general contours of conflict in society: how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings. The central concern of conflict theory is the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power. The conflict theory, suggested by Karl Marx, claims that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. It holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within a society work to maximize their benefits. The conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars and revolutions, wealth and poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence. The conflict approach of regional integration was popularized by Haas (1971) when he claimed that the major aim of regional integration is to acquire new techniques for resolving conflict among the integrating partners. In the process, there is a need to calm down national pride, rights, and sovereignty to achieve this goal.

The Malian crisis alluded to the fact that the conflict in Mali is caused by several factors, which include bad governance, marginalization and exploitation of the masses, poverty, corruption, and weak institutions. Onuaha (2013:21) also opined that corruption in the second and third republics in Mali weakened state institutions, undermined popular faith in the political system, and enabled the predatory activity of criminal and jihadist groups in the north. In a move that symbolised growing concern about the corruption in Mali, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria suspended two grants to Mali and terminated a third in 2010, asserting that grant funds had ended up in officials' pockets. This scandal led to formal investigations of Health Minister, Ibrahim Oumar Toure, and about fourteen other government employees in 2011. Perceptions of pervasive corruption allegations made some Malians feel that their democracy was a sham and that their leaders were unaccountable.

More so, Onuoha (2013) is of the view that regional troubles intensified Mali's problems. Algeria, Mauritania, Niger, and Mali struggled to craft a shared framework for fighting

terrorism. Despite the establishment of a joint command centre in Tamanrasset in 2010, and several regional summits, these governments held different attitudes toward AQIM. For example, when Mali negotiated a prisoner exchange with AQIM in February 2010, Algeria and Mauritania withdrew their ambassadors in protest. As regional counterterrorism cooperation faltered, the civil war in Libya in 2011 dispersed weapons and fighters throughout the Sahel. Touaregs, who had fought for Gaddafi, a long-time manipulator of Sahelian politics and fair-weather friend, returned to Mali to join the MNLA and other armed groups. Libyan weapons increased such groups' firepower. Seasoned fighters with powerful weapons faced an underfunded, understaffed, and under-equipped Malian army, and drove them out of town starting in January 2012.

According to Bruce (2013:7), the causes of the Malian crisis can be attributed to an acute combination of the challenges of poor governance, constitutional crisis, armed rebellion, and growing criminality, especially drug trafficking and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. These factors, in turn, led to Mali's "twin crises": a fragile interim government after a March 2012 military coup and an occupation by Islamist groups in the north that sought to impose their strict application of Sharia law.

Theory of Collective Security

Collective security is one of the most promising approaches to peace and a valuable device for *power management on an international scale. Cardinal Richelieu proposed a scheme for collective security in 1629, which was partially reflected in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. In* the eighteenth century, many proposals were made for collective security arrangements, especially in Europe. The concept of a peaceful community of nations was outlined in 1795 in *Immanuel Kant's Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. Kant outlined the idea of a league of nations that would control conflict and prom*ote peace between states *(Skirbekk, et al, 2001). However, he argues for the establishment of a peaceful world community not in the sense that there would be a global government,* but in the hope that each state would declare itself a free state that respects its citizens and welcomes foreign visitors as fellow rational beings. His key argument is that a union of free states would promote a peaceful society worldwide. Therefore, in his view, there can be a perpetual peace shaped by the international community rather than by a world government.

International co-operation to promote collective security originated in *the Concert of Europe that developed after the Napoleonic Wars in the nineteenth century in an attempt to maintain the status quo between European states and so avoid war (Reichard, 2006). This period also saw the development of international law with the first Geneva Conventions establishing laws about humanitarian relief during war and the international Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 governing rules of war and the peaceful settlement of international disputes (Bouchet-Saulnier, Brav and Olivier, 2007*). The forerunner of the League of Nations, the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), was formed by peace activists, William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy, in 1889. The organization was international in scope with a third of the members of parliament, in the 24 countries with parliaments, serving as members of the IPU by 1914. It aimed to encourage governments to solve international disputes by peaceful means and arbitration and annual conferences were held to help governments refine the process of international arbitration. The IPU's structure consisted of a Council headed by a President, which would later be reflected in the structure of the League (Northedge 1986).*

Collective security can be understood as a security arrangement in which all states cooperate to provide security for all by the actions of all against any states within the groups that might challenge the existing order by using force. The concept of "collective security" forwarded by men such as *Michael Joseph Savage, Martin Wight, Immanuel Kant, and Woodrow Wilson,*

are deemed to apply interests in security in a broad manner, to "avoid grouping powers into opposing camps, and refusing to draw dividing lines that would leave anyone out.".

The crisis in Mali also drew the attention of the AU and ECOWAS. The ECOWAS commission deployed a stabilization force to re-establish state authority in northern Mali. The UN gave maximum support to ECOWAS and AU. The concept behind the operations of the ECOWAS force was refined at two meetings involving senior Malian military officers, ECOWAS, the "core countries" (Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger), the AU, the UN, and other partners such as France, the US, and the EU in Bamako in August and October/November 2012. Taking into account the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region and noting the success registered by the Joint Multinational Force in the Basin of Lake Chad, the G-5 Sahel States (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad) decided, during the Summit of heads of States held in Bamako in February 2017, to create a regional force to combat terrorism.

The African Union Peace and Security Council at its meeting held in Addis Ababa on 13 April 2017 took note of Resolution 00-01, adopted in Bamako, on 6 February 2017, by the Heads of State of the G5 Sahel, at their ordinary Summit, in which, they decided to immediately establish the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel, as well as the final communiqué of the extraordinary meeting of the Defense and Security Committee of G5 Sahel, held in Bamako, on 8 March 2017. The AU Peace and Security Council endorsed the Strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPs) and authorized the deployment of the Joint Force of the G5 for an initial period of twelve (12) months renewable and a strength up to 5,000 personnel, including military, civilian and police components, and others (Maiga, 2017).

It is necessary to recall that, besides the initiatives of the G5 Sahel to combat terrorism, ECOWAS was determined to support member states in the fighting against terrorism and to consolidate peace and security for the whole region. In this spirit, the Authority of Heads of States and government on the Fiftieth Ordinary Session of ECOWAS held in Abuja on the 17th December 2016, direct the President of the Commission to take the necessary steps to organize, as soon as possible, an international conference on security situation in Mali, in conjunction with the African Union and the United Nations, to assess the most appropriate means of intervention likely to enhance the efficiency of the actions underway to preserve Mali's territorial integrity.

Assessment of Terrorist Activities In Mali: Causes and Impact

The Malian Crisis: Causes and Impact

The Malian crisis has deep historical roots, originating from colonial-era divisions between northern Tuareg populations and the southern-dominated government after Mali gained independence from France in 1960. Persistent marginalization led to Tuareg rebellions, starting notably in 1963 (Chauzal and Damme, 2012). Economic hardships and political mismanagement worsened tensions, with Tuaregs joining Muammar Gaddafi's forces in Libya, radicalizing and fueling further unrest. The 1990 rebellion prompted the National Pact in 1992, aiming to address grievances but failing to achieve lasting peace. Escalating conflict in the 2000s, intertwined with Islamist insurgencies, culminated in a 2012 crisis exacerbated by Libya's regime collapse. French intervention reclaimed territory, yet Mali remains fragile, with ongoing security challenges and a precarious peace process, highlighting regional instability and significant human suffering (Keita, 2012).

The Malian crisis, marked by rising terrorist activities, is deeply rooted in historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The colonial legacy of arbitrary borders and ethnic divisions,

particularly affecting the Tuareg people in northern Mali, set the stage for long-standing conflict. Post-independence efforts to democratize and decentralize governance failed to address the north's grievances, leading to persistent rebellion and conflict. Socio-economic disparities, including poverty, unemployment, and environmental challenges in the north, further exacerbated tensions, as did competition for power and resources.

Corruption, favoritism, and poor governance, predominantly benefiting the southern regions, deepened the north's marginalization. The manipulation of ethnic divisions and political strategies by both the Malian state and external actors complicated the crisis, contributing to the rise of ethnic communitarianism and regional instability. Northern Mali's strategic location attracted foreign influences, including support for rebels and radical groups, further destabilizing the region. The government's reliance on military solutions and manipulation of ethnic rivalries has intensified divisions and foreign interference, complicating efforts towards national unity and peace.

The crisis in Mali has had profound and multifaceted impacts on peace and stability in the region. The effects of violent conflict are typically severe, leading to significant destruction and long-term hardship for affected communities. Some of the impact are:
Destruction of Lives, Properties, and Theft of Assets: Conflict inevitably results in loss of life and property. Since the onset of the terrorist crisis in Mali, hundreds of deaths have been reported, escalating to thousands over time. For instance, FIDH and AMDH (2017) recorded at least 117 deaths and 87 injuries from inter-communal clashes in Mopti and Ségou regions in 2016 and 2017. By early 2018, Central Mali became a hotspot of violence, accounting for about 40% of all attacks in the country. The asymmetric nature of the conflict has led to numerous civilian casualties and significant asset destruction. Homes, livestock, and agricultural land have been lost or damaged, impacting households' ability to maintain their livelihoods and recover post-conflict.

Limited Basic Services: Before the 2012 crisis, basic services in northern Mali were already inadequate due to state absence, poor local governance, and corruption. The conflict exacerbated these issues, with public servants fleeing, and infrastructure being abandoned, looted, or destroyed. The provision of essential services, including water and electricity, further deteriorated due to recurring droughts and disruptions in fuel supply (OECD/SWAC, 2014). The conflict has thus severely impacted the resilience of affected communities, reducing their access to critical services and hindering recovery efforts.
Localized Disruption of Social Services: The conflict has worsened the already fragile situation for households in northern Mali. Children, in particular, have suffered from deteriorating nutritional status and reduced access to healthcare. By October 2013, 96 out of 199 health facilities in Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal were damaged or destroyed, and only 19% of medical personnel were available. This has left around 500,000 people without adequate health services and further weakened community structures that traditionally supported health and education (OCHA, 2013).

Restricted Use of Social Safety Nets: The crisis has also affected the ability of households to utilize social safety nets and adaptive strategies. Displacement, economic decline, and destruction of social networks have undermined access to financial support mechanisms such as cash transfers, credit, and remittances. By December 2013, approximately 450,000 Malians were internally displaced or refugees, increasing their dependence on external aid. The conflict has disrupted economic activities, halted cash flows, and closed down essential services, exacerbating the vulnerability of affected populations (OCHA, 2013).

Deterioration of Food Security: Conflict has severely impacted food security in Mali. Prior to the 2012 crisis, Mali already faced food insecurity, but the conflict disrupted food production and trade, leading to a significant decline in food stocks. Smuggling of food from Algeria, once a critical supply source, decreased dramatically due to increased security measures. By December 2013, areas in Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal were deemed in food security crisis, with factors such as reduced agricultural production, high food prices, and conflict exacerbating the situation (OCHA, 2013). Price fluctuations further threatened food security, highlighting the close link between conflict and food insecurity in the region.

Overall, the crisis in Mali has had a devastating impact on peace and stability, affecting every aspect of life from basic services and social infrastructure to food security and community resilience.

Government's Approaches to Combating Terrorism in Mali

The Malian government has long been criticized for its lack of decisive action against AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), with accusations of insufficient political will and reluctance to engage fully in military operations. Former President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) faced significant challenges, including limited resources and fears of exacerbating the country's instability. For instance, in 2010, his controversial decision to release militants to secure a French hostage led to diplomatic tensions with Algeria and Mauritania. Despite these issues, Mali struggled economically due to declines in tourism and the impacts of organized crime and corruption linked to AQIM.

However, there have been signs of a shift in policy. Under pressure from the US and France, Mali began taking more active measures against AQIM. In early 2011, ATT permitted French forces to pursue kidnappers in Mali, signaling a more proactive stance. Regional cooperation efforts also intensified, with Algeria pledging financial support to stabilize northern Mali and curb AQIM's influence. Despite these efforts, large-scale military engagement remains risky, as it could provoke terrorist attacks in Bamako and further destabilize the region.

The 2012 Tuareg rebellion and subsequent jihadist occupation of northern Mali led to a French military intervention in January 2013, which halted the expansion of jihadist forces and allowed for the gradual reclaiming of territory by Malian forces. Despite the transition from Operation Serval to Operation Barkhane and the deployment of the UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), establishing effective and sustainable local governance has remained elusive. Notable incidents, such as the 2017 suicide car bomb attack, highlight ongoing security challenges.

Efforts to establish peace have been hampered by persistent governance failures and corruption. Previous Malian governments employed a mix of repression, decentralization, and cooptation to address armed rebellion, but these methods have often been ineffective. The 2015 peace accord, which aimed to grant more power to regional authorities without federalism, represents progress, but implementation has been slow and fraught with difficulties. The formation of various armed groups and the complexity of negotiating with them further complicate the peace process. Despite these challenges, the continued dialogue and the involvement of international mediators offer a glimmer of hope for achieving a more stable and peaceful Mali.

Assessing Regional Interventions in the Malian Crisis

Regional Cooperation: A Bilateral Approach: The Malian crisis involves complex regional and international dynamics. In 2010, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger formed a cooperative effort to combat terrorism, creating a shared anti-terror command and planning a joint intervention force. However, Morocco and Libya's exclusion hinders broader regional cooperation. Niger, struggling with weak infrastructure and security, faces challenges in countering terrorism and managing its relationship with France after the attacks in 2011.
Algeria's role is ambiguous; while it criticizes Mali's counterterrorism efforts and avoids international intervention, it also benefits from regional instability to gain U.S. support. Algeria is suspected of indirectly supporting AQMI to maintain regional instability, which allows it to remain a key ally of the U.S. and assert regional influence, particularly over northern Mali's oil resources (Lohmann, 2011).

Libya's role is similarly complex. The Gaddafi regime has acted as a mediator in Tuareg conflicts and attracted Tuareg fighters to support his regime. The fall of Gaddafi and the return of Tuareg fighters to Mali could either trigger a new rebellion or increase petty crime, depending on their integration into society. The varied Tuareg responses to Gaddafi's regime add to the uncertainty, creating a tangled situation of regional and international interests.
Regional Cooperation: A Multilateral Approach: The creation of regional integration organizations in Africa aimed to foster political and socio-economic cooperation. Key initiatives included the Economic Commission for Africa's Lagos Plan for Action (1980), which led to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Preferential Trade Areas (later COMESA). The Economic Community of Central African States and the Arab Maghreb Union were established in the 1990s. The Abuja Treaty set the stage for the African Union's creation in 2001, with other regional groups like the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), COMESA, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC) also emerging. The Horn of Africa countries were grouped under IGAD. The Mali crisis has shown both the capabilities and limitations of these regional organizations in addressing security, political, and humanitarian issues. The roles of ECOWAS, the African Union, and the European Union in this context are examined to understand their impact on the conflict.

The Role of ECOWAS in the Malian Crisis: Despite the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) having mechanisms for conflict prevention and peacekeeping, it has faced challenges in addressing the Mali crisis. ECOWAS's 1999 protocol and subsequent frameworks like the 2008 Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) outline its commitment to conflict resolution, including early warning systems and mediation. However, practical limitations have hindered its effectiveness, such as the absence of key regional players like Algeria and Libya, limited resources, and competing crises.

In response to the Mali crisis, ECOWAS initially focused on restoring constitutional order and imposed sanctions on the junta. While it prepared a military intervention force, it faced obstacles from within Mali and neighboring states, particularly Algeria and Mauritania, which opposed military involvement due to concerns about destabilizing the region further. The international community's intervention, particularly France's Operation Serval, was prompted by an extremist offensive threatening Mali's capital, which accelerated the retaking of northern Mali and the deployment of ECOWAS's AFISMA force.

The Role of the African Union (AU) in the Malian Crisis: The African Union (AU) has established several conflict prevention and management mechanisms, including the Peace and

Security Council, a standby brigade, and an Early Warning System. The AU's commitment to counter-terrorism includes the 1999 Convention on Terrorism and the 2001 Dakar Declaration. In 2004, the African Center for Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was created to enhance regional cooperation against terrorism. A 2010 AU law prohibits ransom payments to terrorists and facilitates their prosecution and extradition.

In response to the Malian coup, the AU coordinated with ECOWAS and the UN to develop a response. The West African Standby Brigade was not ready, leading to a coalition intervention. By December 2012, the AU supported an ECOWAS-led mission (AFISMA), which was later authorized by the UN Security Council. AFISMA's mission was to support Mali's defense forces and stabilize northern territories but faced logistical and financial challenges. AFISMA was eventually absorbed into the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), focusing on stabilization rather than counter-terrorism.

While not a regional organization in Africa, the EU has been involved in the Sahel region through its comprehensive crisis management and development approach. The EU's strategy includes the European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, which aims to integrate security and development efforts. The EU also supports MINUSMA with training missions, such as the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM-Mali), focused on training Malian forces rather than direct combat.

Reasons for Regional Interventions in the Malian Terrorist Crisis

The conflict in Mali has become a significant regional and international concern due to its potential to destabilize neighboring states and the broader continent. Mali's instability has attracted Islamist extremists, turning northern Mali into a new base for jihadists and shifting their focus from South Asia to North Africa and the Sahel. This situation threatens international peace, as highlighted by U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. Nigeria's President Jonathan emphasized the urgency of addressing the crisis to prevent wider regional impacts and investment risks (Panetta, 2013; Newman, 2013).
The region's volatile history, marked by governance issues, poverty, and criminal activities, has created a fertile ground for extremist groups. The conflict has exacerbated a humanitarian crisis, with significant numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons facing severe conditions. The Sahel region's history of armed groups and criminal enterprises, coupled with international neglect, has allowed extremist groups like al-Qaeda to thrive (Clarke, 2013).
The crisis also represents a struggle between different Islamic traditions, with extremist groups imposing strict sharia law in contrast to the more moderate Sufi traditions of most Malians. The ongoing instability affects neighboring countries and highlights the need for regional cooperation to manage the spread of terrorism and extremism.

Challenges in Regional Cooperation during the Malian Crisis:

The Malian crisis has exposed several challenges in regional cooperation efforts. Firstly, ECOWAS struggled with controlling armed conflict due to its lack of financial and logistical resources, leading to a delayed response. The UN eventually supported the creation of the African-led mission, AFISMA, but it was the French Operation Serval that initially addressed the crisis due to the slow deployment of regional forces.
Secondly, transnational crime, including trafficking in people, drugs, and small arms, has further complicated efforts. Despite ECOWAS’s initiatives like the Convention on Small Arms

and Light Weapons and the ECOSAP program, weak border controls and security sectors have hindered their effectiveness.

Thirdly, regional cooperation has been hampered by the lack of a unified regional framework. Organizations like the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) have not effectively coordinated regional responses due to internal rivalries and lack of functionality. Algeria's attempts at regional coordination through the Core Countries initiative also failed to produce operational results (Lacher, 2013).

Fourthly, strained relationships between ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN have been a significant barrier. The transition from MICEMA to AFISMA highlighted issues in inter-organizational cooperation, revealing a need for improved relations and coordination to address future crises effectively.

Fifthly, the AU's limited capacity and reliance on external funding for peace operations have been problematic. The African Standby Force (ASF), intended to respond rapidly to crises, has not achieved full operational capability, further complicating the response to the Malian crisis.

Lastly, internal governance issues in Mali, including weak administration, corruption, and lack of development, have exacerbated the crisis. The region's remote and isolated nature, coupled with historical autonomy and internal conflicts, makes it difficult to exert government control and address the root causes of extremism and crime effectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Regional cooperation and integration in Africa are crucial for fostering unity, addressing common security challenges, and building stronger economies and industrial resilience. The continent has faced persistent political instability and crises that have often surpassed individual state control. Collaborative efforts, pooling resources and military forces, have significantly contributed to resolving various conflicts.

The situation in Mali, once seen as a successful African democracy, has deteriorated into severe turmoil since 2012 due to terrorist activities and uprisings. The breakdown of democratic institutions in Mali highlights broader issues in African politics and underscores the limitations of government and international interventions. Despite efforts, military action alone is insufficient to resolve the crisis, as it fails to address underlying causes such as marginalization, power concentration, and socio-economic deprivation. In conclusion, while regional cooperation has made some progress in managing the crisis, it has not fully succeeded in combating terrorism in Mali. The root causes of the conflict, including marginalization and socio-economic issues, remain largely unaddressed, hindering long-term peace and stability in the region.

Therefore, the following are the recommendations:

1. **Inclusive Governance:** The Malian government should implement all-inclusive policies that uphold civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Improve democratic practices by organizing free, fair, and peaceful elections with broad participation.

2. **Reinforce Human Rights Mechanisms:** Strengthen national and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms. Promote inclusive dialogue at all levels, ensuring meaningful participation from all parties, including aggrieved or opposing groups.

3. **Strengthen Regional Cooperation:** Enhance regional cooperation for collective security. Monitor national boundaries to prevent weapons proliferation and trans-border criminal activities, ensuring regional safety.

4. **Deepen Intelligence and Military Collaboration:** Increase collaboration among African and West African organizations in intelligence sharing, information exchange, and military capabilities to effectively combat insurgency and radical ideologies.

5. **Ensure Responsive Regional Frameworks:** Ensure member states are prompt and responsive in addressing citizen grievances to prevent conflict escalation. Support member states in socio-economic development, military cooperation, and terrorism response efforts.

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